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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
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PARIS AND LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHERS  
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SUBJECT: EASTERN CHAD: EUFOR OUTPACING MINURCAT, IMPROVING SECURITY  
IN CAMPS AND ABECHE

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¶1. SUMMARY. Despite earlier delays, the European Mission in eastern Chad has now leapfrogged impressively ahead of the UN police training mission which provides the raison d'etre for its presence. Hopes are pinned on the recent arrival of UN Special Representative Victor Angelo to speed up MINURCAT deployment. As elsewhere in Chad, rumors of impending rebel movements (true or false) circulate rapidly among a nervous population, but the EUFOR presence near camps and in Abeche has already improved security for refugees and humanitarian workers. As the rainy season draws near, continuing problems in the Libya corridor have impacted refugee rations in the east. End Summary.

#### EUFOR ANNOUNCES INITIAL OPERATING CAPABILITY

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¶2. (U) The European Mission in Chad and Central Africa (EUFOR) announced initial Operating Capability on 17 March 2008. This date kicks off their 12-month countdown to end of mission. EUFOR leaders will conduct a mid-mission review in August 2008 to assess the progression of the mission and discuss the possibility of a "bridging" operation or follow-on force (possibly observers) after their mandate expires.

¶3. (SBU) In meetings with the Ambassador and the DATT in Abeche on March 18, EUFOR leaders articulated their mission as providing a security umbrella for MINURCAT, IDP and refugee camps, as well as the "war affected" population of eastern Chad. EUFOR leaders also reiterated their authority to patrol 10 Km outside the camps and the right of pursuit up to the Sudanese border, but not to maintain a permanent presence along the border. Finally, EUFOR leaders expressed a desire to move quickly in supporting relocation of Chadian Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Dar Sila region of Chad in order to reinforce their announcement of initial operating capability and demonstrate their resolve.

¶4. (U) EUFOR deployment currently stands at 1790 with 1150 of those deployed troops being of French origin. EUFOR expressed some concern regarding the short term deployment of the Portuguese and the Swedes who are due to depart in August. Several contributing nations (Albania, Russia, Ukraine among those mentioned) have committed to a deployment but have not finalized dates or number of personnel and type of equipment. The lack of a multi-national presence in Birao, Central African Republic (CAR) was mentioned as an issue that needs to be addressed as this contingent is made up exclusively of French soldiers and is not representative of the coalition.

15. (SBU) Although EUFOR had a later start than MINURCAT due to difficulties in mustering logistics support and troop commitments, EUFOR is now significantly ahead of the UN Police training mission in terms of readiness to perform the mission set out in UN Security Resolution 1778. MINURCAT has been bogged down in negotiations with the Government of Chad (GOC) over Chadian police stipends. In addition, MINURCAT trainers are still waiting for the names of the 800 Chadian police and gendarmes who have been proposed by the GOC for training. Once these names are provided, another month will go by before the first tranche of police are trained, equipped and ready to assume their duties protecting refugees, IDPs and humanitarian workers.

#### CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS

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16. (U) The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) has moved smartly to address the frequently articulated concerns of the humanitarian community vis a vis civil and military relationships and the importance of maintaining the strict neutrality of humanitarian assistance. OCHA has disseminated "Civil-Military Guidelines and Reference for Complex Emergencies" - the first collection of core humanitarian instruments produced by the United Nations and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on this subject and bringing together the essential guidance materials in order to assist humanitarian and military professionals to handle civil-military issues in a manner that respects and reflects humanitarian concerns at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. OCHA will host a workshop on the guidelines in N'Djamena and a more extensive two-day seminar on the guidelines April 2-3 in Abeche. Members of diplomatic community are encouraged to attend both events.

#### SECURITY IN ABECHE

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17. The EUFOR presence is transforming Abeche - a town already noticeably populated by the offices and vehicles of western relief workers. EUFOR and MINURCAT staff report that the town has been quiet and generally safe for international staff. Despite rumors of rebel movements, MINURCAT still considers banditry to be the largest overall security threat facing people in Abeche and in eastern Chad as a whole. The introduction of 24/7 EUFOR roving patrols in Abeche shortly will provide an additional measure of security to the town. As elsewhere in Chad, rumors of rebel movements (often false) circulate rapidly among a panicky population, creating difficulties for EUFOR and MINURCAT security advisors in separating fact from fiction as they seek to assess the security situation outside of Abeche.

#### HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN EASTERN CHAD

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18. (SBU) Due to insufficient food stocks in eastern Chad, related to continuing problems with the Libya corridor pipeline, WFP has had to reduce the food ration for distribution to refugees from 2100 Kc to 1644 Kc for the month of March. This reduction in rations will continue until the Libya corridor can be opened and WFP receives sufficient food stocks for April/May distributions. USAID/OFDA/FFP are working with WFP Chad and Rome to find solutions to the Libya corridor problems and support sufficient prepositioning of food stocks in eastern Chad prior to the rainy season.

19. (SBU) UNHCR has stated their logistics are insufficient to transport the newly-arrived Sudanese refugees to the two camps outside Guereda. Currently UNHCR has five trucks in position in the east; they need at least 25 fully operational in order to move the refugees to more secure locations in a timely manner. USAID/OFDA and PRM are informed of the issue and PRM is in dialogue with UNHCR to help find a solution to the logistics problem.

#### COMMENT

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¶10. (SBU) The EUFOR pace is impressive. Their presence near camps and in Abeche has already improved security for refugees and humanitarian workers. It is hard to overstate the logistical difficulties that these operations face, given that Abeche is known as the most landlocked destination anywhere in the world - and probably the one with the poorest transport infrastructure.

¶11. (SBU) But the delay in MINURCAT deployment poses problems for EUFOR, as EUFOR's raison d'etre is to provide force protection to MINURCAT. Many hope that the recent arrival of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Victor Angelo, will give a much-needed political push to discussions with the government on what has become a battle of wills over compensation.

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